
Ethiopia And The Social Media Politics

The roll of social media is known to be significant in shaping the outcome and courses of political and socio-economic aspects known to the world. In countries like the United States, politicians use social media to inspire voters in their favor and secure their ballot as well as Presidents in helping their reforms come across to the public. In Ethiopia since the debut of internet 7 to 8 years ago, the number of users grew into millions and has had a positive outcome on the country with Facebook users keeping tab on relatives or applying for jobs, with local celebrities and artists introducing their works and arts on Instagram or community of activists and bloggers offering their followers with alternative source of news and updates.

On the contrary many blame the existence of such Medias in the country of “subordinate civil society” for causing different unresolved issues and miscommunications between the people and the government as well as igniting ethnic conflicts that are concealed on certain parts of the country. The former political administration choose to take matters into its own hands, centralizing power and control over social media or other media outlets by banning different activists’ blogs and sites as well as taking down the internet access altogether. However, this approach other than giving a temporary relief, failed to determine and resolved the problem from the core.

After Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed came to office, the former centralized authority became more flexible, with the internet being unchained from the hands of the government and becoming more open to the users. Yet, false information led by fake profiles, and outsourced propagandas still manage to shake the new found sense of unity and peace amongst the people of Ethiopia. With thousands of exaggerated information and altered images surfacing on the internet every day some conclude shutting down social media sites is the solution the country needs while others argue diverse strategy of educating users in filtering information and following the web traffic more closely is what must be done by the government. After all many use these social media sites to inspire, educate and help others.

For instance after the recent unrest and displacement cases in the outskirts out Addis Ababa mainly in the “Burayu” region, group of people have been using social media to collect donations to the displaced citizens, sites like setaweet and yellow movement use social media as their main tool to create awareness about equality of women, upcoming writer pages like Everted and Hermy writes promote their work of arts proving that Ethiopians need and deserve the access of internet to help transform themselves and the country’s economy.